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THE VISUAL IMAGE IN LITERATURE.

THERE are more things in common betwixt literature and art than are dreamt of in our philosophy. One of these is the visual image. Shut your eyes and try to call up a familiar face. Can you see it? If at all, I suspect only dimly, nebulously, flittingly—like the half-formed shapes that glide across our bedroom ceilings, cast upon them *camera obscura* like through the slats of closed shutters. Few indeed can even conceive visualizing power like that of the young Corsican in Sir William Hamilton's anecdote, who, after once writing, could repeat from memory, backward or forward, continuously or by skipping, thousands of unrelated words, Latin, Greek, barbarous, of recondite meaning or none. "He seemed," says Hamilton, "to see the whole list just as it was written." That possible, the rest was easy.

Most of us, however, can colorably visualize hardly anything, even the thing we have just been staring at. Children can far better, but with years of disuse comes loss. Take up the book that was vividest in your childhood: you appreciate a hundred things which for you as a child were undreamed of; but how much more the child saw! I, for instance, can now read more or less philosophy into Christian's perilous passage through the dark valley, with the fiends howling and leering and threatening from either side; but I no longer tremble and shut my eyes tight and stop up my ears because with the inspired tinker I see and hear those ghastly sights and sounds. We were brother artists then, Bunyan and I; now I am only a reader.

Once in a while, perhaps, comes a poet with scalpel keen enough to lift the cataract for a moment. Who can help really seeing, if he will only let himself, Rossetti's picture?

The sun has gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

Even here the illusion hardly outlives half a dozen readings; we begin to think about it, and thinking is the death of seeing. Intellectually, critically—whatever we mean by that—we may still in a vague way appreciate, applaud; we say it is a just, a happy figure. But we are not ourselves happy in it. Only a child, or the genius which is like a child's, can be that. *They* watch the little moon-wisp until it has quite quivered out of sight. For them the stars do sing together—maybe as a group of white-robed girls with choir-books in their hands, as the strangely childlike William Blake saw them.

Most of us feel vaguely our loss of the power to form visual images, to see what we read. We turn therefore, instinctively, to the illustrator. It is only another phase of the ever-growing division of labor, that we thus hire another to do our seeing for us. For myself, reading Dante, I, willy nilly, surrender my right to see him for myself to Doré and Flaxman. I know the sentimentally romantic vision of the one is as perverted as the pseudo-classical re-vision of the other; but what use to know? As a boy I "exposed" my retina to these mischievous images, and now they will not out.

There may be those who will not agree in the present instance about this matter of seeing Dante for yourself rather than through the more artistic vision of a great illustrator, if not Doré or Flaxman, then some other truer. I am of that party myself. Suppose I could recall my childish power of imagining. Should I thereby any the better visualize Dante? Not one whit. I should indeed be as Dante himself—viewing

a vision of my own creating, but it would not look like his vision. I might, were I of like large mold, feel as he felt; because feeling is the same in this nineteenth century as it was in the fourteenth—at least we think so. But seeing is not the same.

A paradox? Even so, but not of my making. We believe that there is a fixed ratio between experience and emotion. When we read how Dante mourned for Beatrice dead, we believe we can sympathize with his sorrow by virtue of like sorrow following like experience; but when at the first anniversary of Beatrice's death, Dante, as he tells us in the "*Vita Nuova*," sat down and drew the picture of an angel, no possible personal, inner experience on our parts could help us to draw that vision as Dante drew it, see it as he saw it. Why not? Simply because there is no fixed ratio between our emotions and the images through which we realize them to ourselves and others.

You will distinguish. An angel is outside the natural; it is but a symbol; doubtless Dante may have expressed the symbolic in a way peculiar to himself; it would be only luck if we could duplicate his angel; but in things of common experience it would be different; between nature and visual images based on nature there is surely a fixed ratio at all times and in all ages. Well, I shall have to differ twice over. I doubt if Dante's angel was a mere individual caprice, incapable of reproduction by us; I doubt further if we visualize the constant, nature, in any constant way.

You assume that a visual image is but a composite photograph taken directly, by superposition upon the dry plate of the imagination, from innumerable first-hand nature proofs. But try to call up the image of some one that you live with and love. Your wife, say. Do there not rise up the lineaments, say, of some faded photograph that you gloated over years ago when you had not the changing elusive reality to console you? The fixed lines of that old likeness bit into your mental retina. They are indelible, where the ever-varying rubbings of reality have left but a blur. Wherever they come from, consider your visual images, and you will

find in the same way not even a composite reproduction of the real things they pretend to stand for, but a reprint, generally conventionalized, often trivialized, not rarely absurdly incongruous, from usually a very few, but accidentally potent, impressions not uncommonly dating back to your youth, even your childhood. Try to draw your visual image of a cat for your little boy, and ten to one, unless later technical training may have modified it, you will find yourself drawing just the same curious triangular-rectangular combination upon four divergent straight lines which your father drew for you, and his father for him, and so on back until we find it again engraved upon an Egyptian obelisk or scratched upon a derelict tool drifted down from the stone age. For that prehistoric artist it was realism itself; for us it is become a *transmittendum* of the visualizing imagination, a rudimentary visual image left uncrushed in the crucible of change.

So far from nature imposing our visual images upon us, it sometimes happens just the other way. We impose our visual image upon the fact in nature that seemed to evoke it. Who has not metamorphosed a dead leaf in the corner of the yard into a live mouse? How many of the terrific specters of our childhood turned out to be just a nightgown over the back of a chair! How stiffly unnatural the rocking-horse courser of the art of yesterday appears beside the fiery instantaneity of Mr. Frederic Remington's mustangs! How grotesquely unreal, impossible, these instantaneous attitudes seemed when Mr. Muybridge first photographed them some ten or fifteen years ago! Horses have not changed; our visual image of Horse has. Once again, who ten years ago saw the purple in conventionally green nature until Claude Monet and his kind saturated our visualizing imaginations with their purples? Now some see altogether purple; others valiantly refuse to take off their green glasses. It is a visual image in process of becoming.

The fact is, in the ceaseless flux of sensations called life our imagination goes poking after something fixed and immutable with all the clumsy insistence of intoxication. Any-

thing, anything to hold on to, to stand still while we fix it in our memory one moment, so that we can call it our own and reach out for something else. In vain. Like Mr. Gillette's Private Secretary with his "goods and chattels," we clutch desperately at one slipping bundle of impressions only to let another fall. We should never get anything picked up permanently if somebody were not at hand to help us.

In the matter of those bundles of impressions which we call visual images, this opportune somebody is the artist. Amidst the welter and whirl of the visible real, art alone holds up quiescent and relatively permanent forms. Art may hold—sometimes—the mirror up to nature; but if so, the mirror is a Gorgon's shield freezing into stone nature's mobile face. Art catches and keeps the fleeting glimpse, but only as we keep the butterfly, by making him a lifeless, pin-fixed husk. And the pin which fixes nature for art is convention. Talk of realism as we will, art does and ever must idealize, conventionalize. To isolate a particular aspect is profoundly to alter it: that which looks gray by itself, grows black beside white, or white beside black. So, away from distracting surroundings, caught in a momentary suffusion of white or yellow or red or purple light, focused to the most effective perspective, infused with the indescribable but equally indisputable personality of the artist, under such transfiguring conditions, what is to become of the commonplace nonentity which art found real and left ideal. Seeing the real and the ideal, which do we remember, and afterwards when the place or thing is named, visualize, provided indeed we have left any power to do such an unpractical thing? Must we not inevitably have found ourselves preferring the artist's vivid image to our own vaguer, poorer, under-exposed negative? Apart from better or worse, just because the art-thing is there and the nature-thing often is no longer among our possible experiences, the former is fixed in our imaginations. We go back and back to it. It waits for us to study it, to absorb it. *Wait* is what nature, life, will never do. He runs well who can catch nature on

the fly, as the bolder scampers of impressionism convince all but the most complacent of enthusiasts.

Force, vital as well as physical, tends to act in the line of least resistance. Hence most of us, when we find an artist making a convenient image for us, spare ourselves the trouble of trying to form one for ourselves. There is even a fashion in such things. What is your visual image of a pretty girl? Before you answer, I almost think I can tell you. If you are an up-to-date American, I will venture to say that you can hardly draw your ideal without a reminiscence of Gibson, even though you never in your life saw a complete "Gibson" girl, or your sweetheart may not look a bit like one. If you had happened to be an Englishman, I should have said, instead of Gibson, Du Maurier. In fine, let me illustrate the popular journal, the popular book, the popular street car advertisement, and with that lever I will lift nature off her pedestal and set up a goddess of my own.

But perhaps it may be urged that the secret of these popular image makers, these Gibsons and Du Mauriers, is that they give the most complete composite photograph of the American or the English girl. At least it is hard for a contemporary to deny the possibility, for we have come to see with their eyes, while their prestige lasts. Drenched with their visual image, this overflows and dyes everything toward which we turn the buckets of our eyes. It is the dead-leaf mouse and the nightgown ghost over again: the mental image completes, if it does not create, the outer fact.

Take, however, the types of other days. Consider visual images, say of beautiful women, how they grow. I suppose we may plausibly name as the supremely beautiful woman of classical antiquity the Venus of Milo, or at least her type. Certainly in the modern world no type has long dispossessed the Madonna of Raphael. Whence the visual image of Raphael? Is the Madonna del Granduca but an Italian peasant girl, idealized a little? No doubt, if due allowance be made for the rider, "idealized a little." In that is the secret. "To idealize a little" means to bring a little nearer

than nature does to a preconceived idea. In the sphere of things seen, this idea is a visual image; what else could it be? Raphael painted on his barrel head another wonderful *contadina* asleep there in the market place with her babe at her breast. Why? Because she was beautiful. True; but again why? Is it not that her face was a faint and imperfect adumbration of the ideal beauty, the complete visual image printed in his own imagination? Else why is she so like all the rest of his women, Madonna or mistress equally? We may grant that, having chosen, he may have tried to copy ever so conscientiously the living model as she was; but between her and him, like a sweet mist, interposes a beauty that he has learned by heart. It is that optical illusion that sways him like a demon; its curves are magnets to his pencil. It is the visual image of his master, Pietro Perugino. Perugino's women and Raphael's are like as mothers and daughters: each the "fairer daughter of a mother fair." If the master may have lacked something of the pupil's human touch, it is because Perugino refreshed his visual image less often by contact with earth, whence, Antæuslike, Raphael's imagination each time sprang the stronger, if, it may be, the less ethereal.

If Raphael took his visual image from Perugino's, where must we look for the original of Perugino's? Again, on the same principle of economy, art refuses to hunt among the mazes of reality for what lies ready to its hand in older art. I am not writing the *provenance* of Perugino's womanly type, or I might trace this type backward step by step to the "almond-eyed, sleek-faced, waistless women" of Giotto, as a living critic¹ has aptly described them. And Giotto's type, in turn, is so closely derived from the hieratic stolidities of Cimabue that it has been popularly asserted that Giotto was Cimabue's pupil. And Cimabue got his visual image from the decadent Greek type of Byzantium; and that came straight from the golden type of Pheidias and Apelles; and theirs again from the stiffly hieratic type, so

¹ Mr. Bernhard Berenson.

reminiscent of the late Byzantine, of the Egyptians; and these got theirs, for aught I know to the contrary, by degrees from Adam's first cataclysmic glimpse of Eve as she dawned on his waking sight in Eden.

Thus with curiously regular fluctuations in degree of convention, now comparatively close to what we moderns are pleased to call nature, now far away in most formal symbolism, a single visual image of Woman has propagated itself from the dawns of art to our own day; for we still enjoy, absorb, copy it in Raphael's Madonnas. In other words, the visual image, which is the real model of art, has a living evolution of its own, parallel with the fact, which it pretends to copy, but of which it is largely independent.

The artist, then, thinking to reproduce nature in her very form and feature, is self-deceived. He at most but varies by a deepened shadow or two that whole adumbration of his so seeming solid individuality, the inherited visual image of his predecessors; but hands on to the next following the *transmittendum* with his initials on it added to so many others. If artists can add so little to our stock of visual images, what should we expect from authors, whose is the material less of things seen than of things done? The artist can at least show us his visual image, if he happens to have one about him, for his tools reshape the visible; but the author, as Lessing long ago noticed, has in language the poorest possible tool for producing the illusion of sight. Further, in the nature of the case, the poet cultivates rather impressions of the ear than of the eye. If the visual imagination in him were supreme, he would, *ipso facto*, be painter and not poet. It is the harmony of the spheres that moves him, not their visible symmetry. I am not denying the possible coexistence of both temperaments in one person; I am affirming the natural effect of the excess of one of them in irresistibly bending genius to the brush and chisel or to the pen.

If literature is weak where art is strong, should we not expect the former to borrow from the latter's strength? May we not find that the poet, on a level with the rest of us in this respect, seeks the line of least resistance, and on the

whole accepts his visual image of nature not from nature herself, but from art? Doubtless he pays with no less valuable commodities; but with that side of the exchange I am not now concerned.

Well, what then? *Then*, . . . among other things, we should be led to tear our Doré and Flaxman plates out of our Dante. They pretend to supply us with the visual images which we need to see Dante's visions; but the images they supply take us only farther and farther from what Dante himself saw, and now we know what he saw. If Raphael, whose business, whose greatness, it was to see, could yet see so long with only Perugino's eyes, why should we look for more independent seeing from Dante, whose business, whose greatness, it was to speak. He drew an angel, he who was the time-mate of Giotto; shall we look for more originality in his visual image of the angel than in him that in Dante's day "has the acclaim of all?"

. . . ora ha
Giotto il grido . . . (Purg. xi. 95.)

No. Mr. Berenson has justly stated¹ that Dante's angel must have been just one of those "almond-eyed, sleek-faced, waistless women" that gaze blandly, blankly, at us from the canvases of the great Tuscan.

Can we stop with one angel? If the tyranny of the artist's visual image is over one of an author's imaginings, why not as much over all? I do not wish to ride a hobby lame. I would not be understood to maintain that a great author cannot be a great artist too, and therefore develop visual images with the same degree of partial originality as the professed artist. Dante, for instance, of course added to our stock of visual images, as well as the purely suggestive nature of his medium, language, permitted. I do maintain that all that he added must have been of the Giottesque type, or at least strongly colored by it, just as a writer of our own generation will hardly describe nature without revealing in

¹ *Nation* for 1895. I have, however, no reason to claim Mr. Berenson's agreement with my more radical theory.

every polychromatic sentence the visual image *au plein air* of the impressionists.

The close dependence of the literary visual image upon the artistic is most striking, however, when we compare a little more in the large. It is a trite but convenient generalization to divide the history of art into four periods, corresponding roughly with Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and Modern Times. These four periods are marked by the supremacy of sculpture, of architecture, of painting, of music. Now it is almost a work of supererogation even to note passingly how the dominant mood of art is carried over into the imagery of literature. How obviously Greek authors shared the visual images of Greek sculptors may be illustrated by one fact: the wearing of masks on the stage. The visual imagination of the audience had been bred to the immobility of sculpture; to them the play of expression, which to us is three-fourths of acting, was abhorrent.

As soon, however, as painting grew more to an equality with sculpture, we begin to find its visual trail in the literature following. Already with the *Idyls* ("little pictures") of Theocritus we begin to note pictorial, rather than statuesque, images. We may perhaps even yet see the models in some sense upon which Theocritus' imagination drew, if we are told truly that the still preserved mural paintings of Pompeii are largely copied from Alexandrine Greek paintings. At Pompeii, then, we may in a measure see Theocritus' Polyphemus as Theocritus saw him. And if the father of the pastoral was pictorial in his images, his immediate followers were strikingly more so. Listen to the picture by Moschus of Europa upon her Bull: "Europa, riding on the back of the divine bull, with one hand clasped the beast's great horn, and with the other caught up her garment's purple fold, lest it should trail and be drenched in the spray of the sea. And her deep robe was blown out in the wind, like a ship's sail, and it wafted the maiden onward." This is literally a pen picture, which Veronese only restored to its proper domain when he translated it into his Rape of Euro-

pa; although doubtless Moschus himself would hardly have recognized his own chaster vision in the Italian's voluptuous color.

Again, as to the literature latent in the "Stones of the Mediæval Builder," Mr. Ruskin has said the sufficient word. I need only remind whoever has dipped however little into the mediæval romances, of their "Gothic" imagery—endless, infinite, complex, monstrous—so diametrically opposed to the classical sobriety and statuesque simplicity. The eyes of the authors of these convoluted and involuted stories of stories had been fed upon the mazy variety, the majesty of size, the infinite complexity of those romances in stone, the Gothic cathedrals. Their eyes, again, had been reverently lowered before those hieratically conceived saints in wood or bronze or stone, each with his or her appropriate mystical symbol and allegorical beast attendant; or had sparkled with the fire of warlike emulation at the stern, mailed effigies of dead heroes; or had twinkled or trembled at those grim, grinning gargoyles, dangerous only to the sinful who should under their fiendish scrutiny dare to enter into the sacred place.

It is, however, with the Renaissance in Italy that the closest dependence of the visual image upon the creations or the conventions of art begins most clearly to show itself. I have suggested how Dante must have visualized the dead Beatrice through Giotto's conventionalized type. Take now Petrarch, who rhapsodizes¹ over a portrait of his *living* Laura, painted by the Siennese artist, Simone Memmi. We cannot, in the face of his own words, deny that Petrarch was thoroughly satisfied with Memmi's visual image of Laura. We also know Memmi's visual image as it is repeated again and again. It is the Byzantine type sentimentalized a little, but still conventional, still merging in one impersonal type individual differences. In fine, no matter what Laura was in herself, we know how she looked to Petrarch, because we know Memmi's type. Nor is the existence of a procrustean art type, to which all human physi-

¹"Vita di Madonna Laura," sonnets 49 and 50.

ogonomy must perforce conform, confined to these early days of modernity, when—perhaps you will say—the individual as such had hardly yet emerged from his mediæval chrysalis. Jump three whole centuries to Sir Peter Lely; or four to Gainsborough; or five to Whistler: are not their portraits less portrait than themselves. Each and every sitter is first submitted to a kind of readjustment; this feature is toned down, that heightened; robustness is made hectic, or fragility angulated into muscularity; blondes blush darkly in shadow until they seem themselves swarthy, or the dusky brunette suffers a pallid sea change—all according to the foreordaining visual image of the painter. If he is popular, then so is his type. Italian women are mainly dark, but what matters it if your Peruginos and your Raphaels, on classical or other principles, set a blonde woman for adoration? *Abbasso la natura!* Contemporary poets and prose writers alike would have only golden-haired, fair-skinned heroines. Witness Ariosto's Angelica, or Tasso's Armida, or their ectypes in the women of Spenser, or the minutely described Beauty of Firenzuolo.

Often in the literature of the Renaissance in Italy writers appealed so directly to the presumed acquaintance of their readers with the conventions of art that to us, without that key, their meaning is unintelligible. Take an instance at hazard—a passage of no intrinsic importance from Pulci's "Morgante." I translate literally. "When Orlando had said these words with many bitter tears and sighs, it seemed as if three cords or lines descended from the sun as if moved by Iris. Rinaldo and the rest stood as is wont one who father or mother watches die, and each was filled with penitence, as though Orlando might verily have been Francis of the Stigmata." Do you understand what Pulci means by these "three cords or three lines" (*tre corde o tre linee*)? Doubtless; but can you explain them to one who does not, except by showing him one of those oft-repeated pictures of St. Francis on his knees while the stigmata are being burned into his palms, feet, and side by burning rays from the corresponding members of a winged Christ in the sky. Pulci

simply, if profanely, transfers the exact visual image from one of the many illuminated books of the saints to his pen picture of the death of Orlando at Roncesvalles.

Illustrations like this might be multiplied at pleasure. For when the revived interest in classical antiquity had once taken firm hold upon Europe, everywhere literature is only a moment behind sculpture, painting, and architecture in repeating visual image after image imbibed from innumerable rediscovered marbles and bronzes and temples of antiquity or reconstructed from descriptions in classical literature. Botticelli paints Venus newly born from the sea, wafted on her shell by a stalwart Zephyr to the bronzelike shore where Spring awaits her with a garment of flower-enameled green; before Botticelli's paint is fairly dry, the poet Poliziano has caught the image and passed it on to literature in the music and word color of his "Stanze." Piero di Cosimo paints and repaints the rescue of Andromeda; Ariosto no less than three times reinscribes the image in his "Orlando."

Exigencies of worship called for ostensibly devout representation of Virgin or martyr or saint, but as the paganism of the Renaissance more and more asserted itself, more and more in dark backgrounds and unnoticed corners of sacred canvases appear bits of local color, of human nature, of humor—phases cropping out again in the popular tale, and lending more and more visual imagery to the talemongers themselves. To see the Renaissance Italian as he saw himself in the affairs of every day—as beggar, as dandy, as loafer, as business man, as courtier or courtesan, in fine, as the whole *dramatis personæ* of the *Novella*, plot book of Shakspeare and his fellows—study the huge, thronged canvases of Carpaccio. Look at those "heavenly twins," the two Courtesans in the Correr Museum at Venice, the brutality latent in their somber, rouged faces, the ungleeful mirth of the one playing with her pet hound, the artist sympathy with the beautiful and the tender suggested in that graceful flower vase and the two innocent doves, the bird of pride too—how all these things illuminate the brutal, somber, jesting, tender, vain literature of that many-sided time,

which with our own eyes we had but read of, but now with Carpaccio's eyes we can at last see.

The art growth of the Italian Renaissance was so vigorous that the literature seems but a wan ghostly *replica* beside it. In Renaissance England the opposite prevailed. There preoccupation was less with the visible world of art than with the invisible and unvisual world of deed and passion. Hence an unsurpassed literature without illustration, and largely without need of illustration, since it rendered things felt, not seen. Hence a drama naked of scene and setting, because the audience cared for other things than seeing. Where the Elizabethan poet builds up visual images, he builds with imported materials. Shakspeare's miniature on porcelain of Venus and Adonis, with its Arcadian background, lusciousness of nude flesh, voluptuous sentimentality, is but a verbal realization of Giulio Romano's visual image. Spenser, laboriously piling verbal image upon image, nowhere, or so rarely as not to count in the total, sees for himself. He thinks, feels, wills magnificently; but his seeing is demonstrably but the reflection of Italian *Trionfi*, of Italian contrivers of *Imprese*, or emblems, of Italian art itself learned perhaps through the catalogue descriptions of Ariosto and Tasso, of Dante and Petrarch and Sannazzaro.

I can but suggest relationships which it would take more than one volume to explain adequately. But let whoever will visibly see the images which incarnated the crude carnal satires of Fielding and Smollett study their elder contemporary, Hogarth; whoever would realize the pseudo-classic visions of Chénier or Goethe, and Schiller or Landor, fill his retina with the manikin posturings of their predecessor David, the painter; whoever would appreciate the *genre* and portrait methods of the English nineteenth century novel, go first—for here specification should be unnecessary—to the National Gallery, British Section; there he will find what his favorite novelist found and, consciously or no, drew from.

But perhaps it is time to draw a practical conclusion. Since only one in ten can evoke a visual image at all; since

even that one perhaps effectively visualizes those few images which he can fix only by laboriously going back and back to them, as we try by repetition to catch a popular tune, that we say we hear inside of us, but cannot somehow make audibly distinct; since in the vast majority of cases, art, isolating and exalting effects in nature slurred and evanescent, imposes its images upon our retinas, deepens them from our picture galleries, our stage, our illustrated books, magazines, our—*horresco referens*—illustrated daily papers—since art is the image maker of literature, to see as well as hear literature we must study art.

Moreover, there are degrees of imperativeness in this necessity. We go to contemporary literature with about the same common stock of visual images that our authors themselves possess. We both have drawn from the same common source—the pictorial art dominant in the time. To have escaped from that all-pervasive influence, we should have had to live blindfold or else have peeled off the accumulated strata of our retinal membranes. Doubtless literature accumulates auditory, as well as visual, images. Doubtless also in our own day the dominant art is music, and therefore the deeper soul of our literature is expressed rather in the mysticism of sound than in the materialism of sight. It might be interesting to trace the contrasting analogies in literature of the two great modern moods of music, culminating in Handel and Haydn on the one hand, and in Beethoven and Schumann and Wagner on the other. Is it not the difference between Macaulay and Landor and Byron even, with their love of the clear, the definite, the complete, and our Brownings, Whitmans, Lotis, *et id genus omne*, worshipers of the suggestively vague? In art, indeed, we might detect a fusion of the two moods of music: the Preraphaelites, with Burne-Jones as their last exponent, with their love of pure line endlessly and intricately involuted and convoluted—what is this line but the “Harmonious Blacksmith” made visible. Or again in Aubrey Beardsley’s sphinxlike scrolls pure line is again made the supreme end of art; but in his line is obvious what in the Preraphaelites was latent: the sensualism under the mask of the mystic,

the striving, the cult of the remote and the mysterious—in fine, the overtones of the sad, but not very sweet, music of humanity, which is the essence of Wagnerism and of our moment.

But all this about auditory images and associations in literature is as Kipling says, “another story.” I was speaking of the degrees of imperativeness of having to see the book through the picture. Just because there is but slight need in the book of our own generation, because we have acquired the same stock of visual images as the author of the book—just for that reason the book grows less and less visually intelligible the farther its author recedes from our time. We can see him correctly only as we see him in the illustrations of his own day. Even then we see him imperfectly, distorting into unnaturalness the visual image of other times—when we cannot wrest it forcibly into some sympathy with our own.

Further, there are several grades among authors themselves, regarded as transmitters of visible imagery. The author may himself be also an artist, having the seeing gift and the power to reproduce what he sees. Fortunate, then, are his books illustrated by himself; we cannot see wrong in William Blake’s “Songs of Innocence,” for there are his own visual images before our eyes. Next fortunate are we in the artist author who, if not actually, specifically illustrates his own works. So far as I know, Dante Gabriel Rossetti never drew his Blessed Damosel; yet never a picture of his but tells us how she looked to him. Again, although the author may lack the artist’s hand, he may possess the artist’s eye. Consider the more than jealous care Charles Dickens lavished upon the illustrations of his novels, the fifteen or twenty sketches that had to be made for the head of Mr. Dombey before his creator would vouchsafe that “it was good.” But the vastly greater class of authors is that whose book is without extra-illustration. Perhaps the author never thought of the matter, or did not realize that his words, so clear to himself and his kindred readers in that day, might call up totally different images before the

alien readers of another time or place; or perhaps he did make or oversee illustrations now lost. In any case, in the lack of contemporary illustration we have still contemporary art to fall back on, and perhaps that is the best illustration. For, unless I have conceived the whole matter awry, art is the matrix of the visual image of literature, so that from the art which inspired the author to the picture which illustrates correctly his book, the progress is wholly circular; it is the same visual image which was first absorbed by the author's retina, verbally expressed in his book, visibly repeated in his illustration. Let us then extra-illustrate our old books with reproductions of their contemporary art, and no longer with vain and irrelevant imaginings of professional illustration makers, rather illusion makers.

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